

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 05097 01 OF 02 281348Z

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5211

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 5097

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FOR ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, US, JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE

REFS: STATE 177014 AND AMMAN 5083

1. SUMMARY. IN LONG TALK WITH RIFAI (REFTEL) HE MADE POINT THAT JORDAN IS IN PRINCIPLE PREPARED FOR FURTHER DELAY IN CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDERATION, BUT THAT WE SHOULD WAIT UNTIL I SEE KING LATER THIS MORNING ABOUT THIS BEFORE PROCEEDING. HE MADE CLEAR JORDAN'S READINESS TO GO TO SOVIETS AND REPORTED TO ME SOVIET OFFER OF ASSISTANCE. HE INQUIRED ABOUT PROGRESS ON THE NEGOTIATING FRONT AND ASSUMED THAT SECRETARY'S FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE ON IMPROVED CLIMATE MEANT WE WERE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT NEGOTIATING PROGRESS. RIFAI REPORTED SOME IRRITATION ABOUT OUR SUGGESTION OF "FACE-SAVING FORMULA" FOR THE CONGRESS AND NOTED THAT JORDANIANS HAD "TONED DOWN" THEIR REPLY TO US. HE ALSO INDICATED SOME CONCERN ABOUT DELIVERY TIMES AND SAID THEY WOULD WANT TO TALK WITH US FURTHER ABOUT THIS IF SALE WERE TO GO THROUGH. END SUMMARY.

2. AT MEETING MORNING JULY 28 WITH IRFAI, I GAVE HIM FULL REPORT ON OUR ACTIVITIES IN WASHINGTON IN SUPPORT OF SALE TO JORDAN OF AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT. IN PARTICULAR, I EXPLAINED TO HIM SITUATION IN SENATE COMMITTEE IN CON-
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SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 05097 01 OF 02 281348Z

NECTION WITH THEIR REQUEST TO US FOR MORE TIME AND

SECRETARY'S WISH TO PROCEED.

3 IN ADDITION, I DESCRIBED FOR RIFAI IN SOME DETAIL VARIOUS ARGUMENTS WHICH WE HAD USED BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, VARIOUS WITNESSES WHO HAD APPEARED, AND THE POSITIONS OF INDIVIDUAL SENATORS INsofar AS WE KNOW THEM. WHILE MY FULL REPORT COVERED EXTENSIVELY GROUND WITH WHICH YOU ARE FAMILIAR, I LEFT HIM UNDER NO IMPRESSION THAT WE WERE OUT OF THE WOODS OR THAT FROM NOW ON IT WOULD ALL BE DOWNHILL.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH OUR INTENTION TO PROCEED TO POSTPONE FOR FORTY DAYS ACTION IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE, RIFAI UNDERSTANDS OUR METHOD OF PROCEEDING BY RENEWING THE NOTIFICATION OF LETTER OF OFFER BEFORE THE CONGRESS AND SAYS THAT HE HAS DISCUSSED THIS WITH KING AND THEY IN PRINCIPLE ARE PREPARED TO GO ALONG. I MADE SPECIFIC POINTS THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE BREATHING ROOM AT THE PRESENT TIME AND THAT SECRETARY'S FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE ON THE QUESTION OF THE IMPROVED CLIMATE AFTER THE CONGRESSIONAL RECESS WERE IMPORTANT. A ALSO ALLUDED TO PRESS BACKGROUNDER ON PLANE TO EUROPE WHICH APPEARED FURTHER TO REFLECT OPTISISM ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA. RIFAI REPLIED THAT HE WAS PLEASED TO SEE THE OPTISISM AND THAT HE HOPED A NEW INTERIM AGREEMENT WOULD HELP TO CHANGE THE CONGRESSIONAL STAND ON THE JORDANIAN WEAPONS REQUEST HE THOUGHT NOW ALSO WAS THE TIME FOR JORDAN TO MAKE CLEAR THAT IT WAS NOT INTRODUCING PROCEDURAL DIFFICULTIES AND THAT JORDAN SHOULD GIVE US A FAVORABLE ANSWER ON THE EXTRA TIME WHICH WE NEEDED TO HELP ESTABLISH BEFORE CONGRESS THAT IS STILL WANTED THE SALE WITH THE US AND THAT IT WOULD DO ITS BEST TO BE REASONABLE IN HELPING US WORK OUT OUR OWN PROBLEMS. HE ADDED THAT JORDAN WOJLD IN THE MEANTIME UNDERTAKE PRELIMINARY AND QUIET FEELERS ABOUT OBTAINING ALTERNATIVE EQUIPMENT. (COMMENT: I PRESUME THIS RELATES AT LEAST INITIALLY TO VISIT OF SERERAL DAYS OF SYRIAN PRIME MINISTER AYYOUBI WHICH BEGINS LATER THIS MORNING. END COMMENT). RIFAI ALSO ADDED THAT SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 05097 01 OF 02 281348Z

SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAD SEEN KING YESTERDAY OFFERING ANY FACILITY WHICH JORDAN MIGHT NEED. RIFAI SAID HE WAS SURPRISED AT SOVIET INITIATIVE, SINCE JORDAN HAD PREFERRED UNTIL NOW TO HANDLE ANY SUCH RELATIONSHIP ON AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT THROUGH ITS SYRIAN FRIENDS. (COMMENT:I DID NOT DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER VULCAN SHOULD WAIT FOR THE FORTY DAYS OR EVEN WHETHER REDEYE WAS GOING AHEAD. IT DID NOT ARISE AND

I DID NOT FEEL I COULD BE CONCRETE ENOUGH IN THE
ABSENCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION FROM YOU TO CARRY ON
A VERY USEFUL DIALOGUE ON THIS POINT. END COMMENT).

5. THROUGHOUT OUR LONG CONVERSATIO, RIFAI MADE CLEAR
THAT JORDAN WOULD HAVE TO INSIST ON OBTAINING
THE FULL ORDER; THERE COULD BE NO REDUCTION IN NUMBERS.
IN TURN, I MADE CLEAR THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH
IN ALL OF ITS PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH
CONGRESS HAD NOT SUGGESTED ANY REDUCTION IN NUMBERS

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 05097 02 OF 02 281250Z

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 5097

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FOR ATHERTON FROM AMBASSDOR

AND THAT IT TOO INTENDED TO KEEP FAITH WITH JORDAN
ON THIS POINT. RIFAI VOLUNTEERED THAT HE AND KING
HAD BEEN VERY UNHAPPY WITH OUR SECOND FOLLOW-UP
MESSAGE WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE PUT "PRESSURE" ON THEM.
WHAT HE SEEMED TO FIND MOST OBJECTIONABLE WAS THE IDEA
THAT JORDAN SHOULD "BOW DOWN/ BEFORE SOME FACE-SAVING
COMPROMISE MERELY TO PLEASE ISRAEL'S FRIENDS IN THE
CONGRESS, AND INDEED ISRAEL ON THIS POINT. I SAID
I WAS SORRY THAT OUR MESSAGE MAY HAVE AFFECTED THEM
THIS WAY, BUT IT WAS OUR BEST JUDGEMENT OF THE THEN
PREVAILING SITUATION AND WE FELT THAT THEY SHOULD
HAVE IT STRAIGHT. RIFAI ADDED THAT THE REPLY
WHICH THE JORDANIANS HAD SENT BACK HAD BEEN DRASTICALLY
SCALED DOWN FROM THEIR INITIAL TEAFTCON.

6. IN PICKING UP SECRETARYS FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE ABOUT

IMPROVED CLIMATE, RIFAI ASKED HOW INTERIM NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING. I SAID I WAS NOT ACQUAINTED WITH THE DETAILS, BUT FELT THAT THERE WAS REASON FOR SOMEWHAT MORE OPTIMISM ABOUT THE PROCESS AND THAT THIS HAD INDEED APPEARED TO BE REFLECTED IN RECENT US PRESS BACKGROUNDER WHICH I HAD HEARD REPORTED ON RADIO THIS MORNING. RIFAI SAID THIS WAS GOOD NEWS AND ASKED AGAIN WHETHER OUR INTENTIONS TOWARD SYRIA HAD CHANGED AT ALL. I REPLIED THAT SECRETARY'S LAST CONVERSATIONS WITH ASAD AND KHADDAM IN WASHINGTON HAD

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SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 05097 02 OF 02 281250Z

I THOUGHT MADE OUR VIEWS CLEAR AND THAT THERE WAS NO INFORMATION WHICH I HAD WHICH WOULD CHANGE THAT ASPECT OF THE SITUATION.

7. SINCE AYYOUBI WILL BE HERE FOR THE FIRST OF THE JORDANIAN-SYRIAN HIGH COMMISSION MEETINGS, I ASKED RIFAI IF THERE WOULD BE ANY "MILITARY" ANNOUNCEMENTS, ALSO MAKING CLEAR THAT THIS WOULD NOT MAKE IT HELPFUL WITH THE U.S. CONGRESS AT THE PRESENT TIME. HE SAID THAT THERE SHOULD BE NONE AND THE MAJOR FOCUS WOULD BE ON TRADE AND ECONOMIC MATTERS.

8. RIFAI ASKED WHETHER AT THE END OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT WE WOULD BE MAKING SOME POSITIVE DECISIONS ON ISRAELI WEAPONS REQUESTS. I SAID THAT HERE AGAIN I DID NOT KNOW; WE WOULD HAVE TO ADDRESS SUCH QUESTIONS AT THE TIME, BUT THAT PERSONALLY I WOULD NOT RULE SUCH OUT OF THE PICTURE. HE THEN ASKED ABOUT SOME OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE LANCE AND SAID HE WAS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT ISRAELI RESORT TO NUCLEAR WAR AT SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE IF THE SITUATION CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE. HE THEN ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT THE ARABS EVENTUALLY COULD GET NUCLEAR WEAPONS FROM SOME COUNTRY IF IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD THEM AND REFERRED TO THE RECENT PUBLIC REPORT IN WHICH BOB PRANGER WAS A PART AUTHOR WHICH CLAIMED THAT THE ISRAELIS PRODUCED NUCLEAR WEAPONS AT THE RATE OF ONE PER YEAR SINCE 1964, OR AT LEAST ACCORDING TO RIFAI'S READING. I TOLD RIFAI THIS WAS THE SORT OF TRAGEDY WE WERE WORKING TO AVOID AND THAT WE WERE VERY MINDFUL OF SUCH ISSUES IN OUR WEAPONS SUPPLY DECISIONS.

9. RIFAI ALSO REPEATED FOR ME MANY OF THE SAME ARGUMENTS WHICH WE HAVE BEEN USING ON THE HILL. HE SAID THAT WE SHOULD BE UNDER ABSOLUTELY NO DOUBT ABOUT THEIR GOING TO THE SOVIETS IF THEY CANNOT GET THE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM FROM US. HE SAID THAT

INSTEAD OF 14 BATTERIES OF HAWKS THEY CAN GET 40
BATTERIES OF SOVIET MISSILES, AND INSTEAD OF
WAITING FOR THREE YEARS, THEY CAN GET THEM IN SIX
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SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 05097 02 OF 02 281250Z

MONTHS. HIS FRUSTRATIONS WITH THE PROBLEMS WHICH
THE CONGRESS HAS RAISED HAVE BEEN ADDED TO
BY OUR DISCUSSIONS OF DELIVERY TIMES. HE SAID
THAT NEITHER HE NOR THE KING WERE AWARE THAT IT
WOULD TAKE THEM FOUR YEARS TO GET ALL OF THE HAWKS.
WHEN THE CHIEF OF STAFF CAME BACK, THEY DISCUSSED
IT WITH HIM AND HE CONFIRMED THAT THE FIRST
THREE WOULD COME AFTER TRAINING IS OVER; I.E., IN
9-12 MONTHS. I TOLD HIM THAT THIS WOULD BEGIN IN
12 MONTHS AND END IN 15. HE THEN SAID THAT THE CHIEF
OF STAFF HAD SAID THE REMAINDER WOULD COME AFTER 30
MONTHS. THEIR ASSUMPTION WAS THAT THEY WOULD ALL BE
HERE IN ABOUT 30 MONTHS' TIME. I WAS ABLE TO SAY
THEY WERE COMING FROM PRODUCTION AND THAT (ON THE BASIS
OF INFORMATION FROM GEN. FISH'S OFFICE) THEY WOULD
BE DELIVERED ABOUT A MONTH APART. RIFAI SAID THAT
WAS NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR THEM AND THAT HE WANTED
TO PUT US ON NOTICE THAT IF SALE WENT THROUGH THEY EITHER
WANTED TO SPEED UP THAT DELIVERY SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE
PRODUCTIONS SO THAT THEY COULD GET THEIR BATTERIES
IN 30 MONTHS TIME OR SHORTLY THEREAFTER OR THEY
WOULD WANT TO ADD SOME BATTERIES TO THE INITIAL THREE.
I REPLIED THAT I UNDERSTOOD THE POINT, BUT
THAT I FELT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO
RENEGOTIATE THIS ISSUE. HE SAID NEVERTHELESS
IF THE LETTER OF OFFER WAS APPROVED THIS
WOULD BE SOMETHING THEY FELT STRONGLY THEY SHOULD
TALK TO US FURTHER AND WE LEFT THE MATTER AT THIS POINT.
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